

Introduction to Sa-huỳnh

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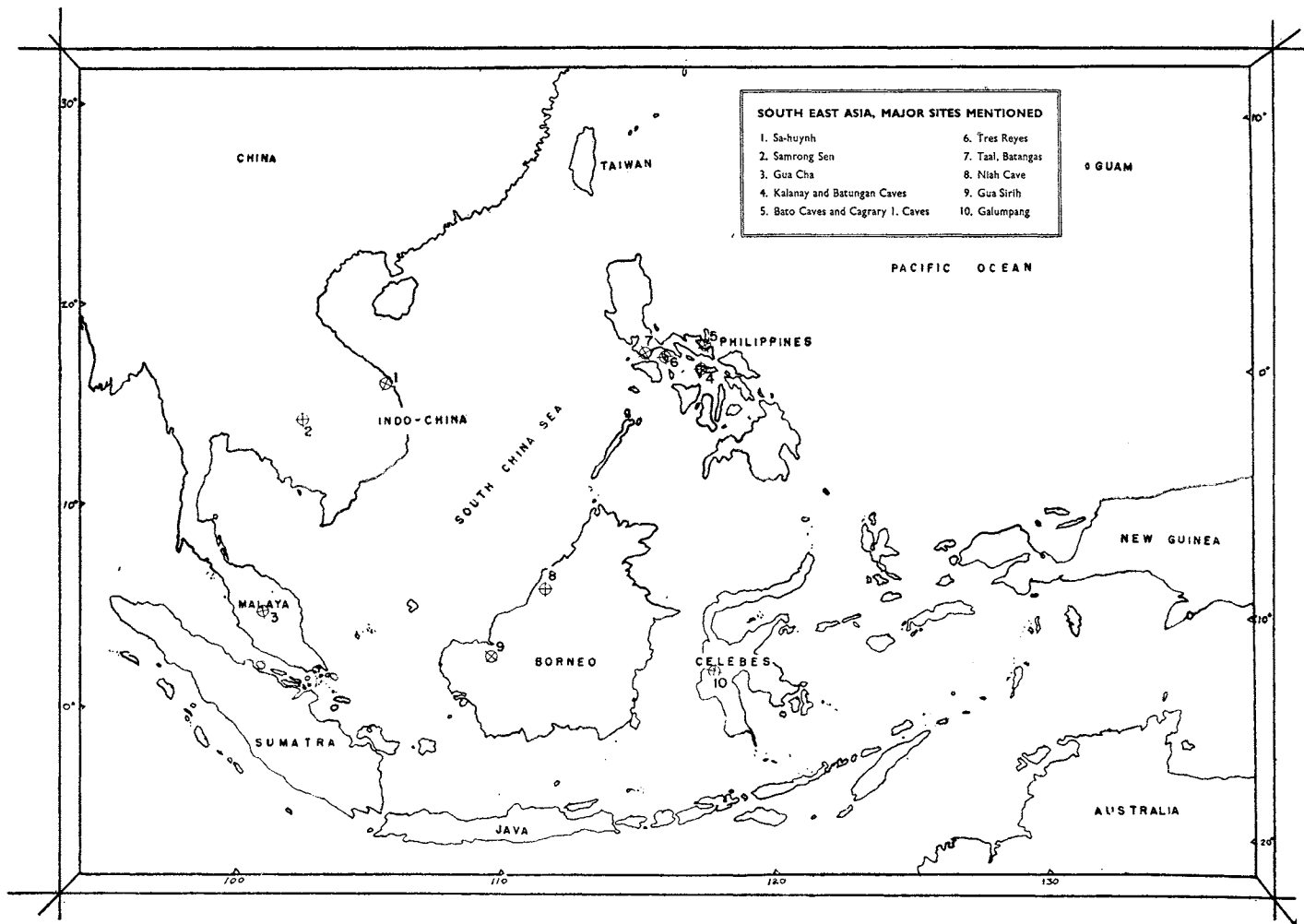
THE idea of this special issue of *Asian Perspectives* originated in Kuching, Sarawak, after seeing for the first time the 'Niah Three Colour Ware' excavated by Tom Harrisson in the Great Cave at Niah. This was in November 1958. The idea solidified when, in December 1958, I visited the museum in Taiping, Federation of Malaya, and Mr B. A. V. Peacock, then the Curator of Museums in Malaya, showed me the sherd collection from northern Malaya and the unpublished material from Gua Cha. At that time I presented a very tentative request to Peacock for a contribution from him on the Neolithic pottery of Malaya.

Moving on to Saigon I ran into Dr Olov R. T. Janse. I had several conversations with him on Vietnamese archæology (past, present and future), and made a tentative request to him for a paper reviewing his excavations in the neighbourhood of Sa-huỳnh. Spending Christmas in Manila, I saw some of the material excavated in Marinduque by Arsenio Manuel, of the University of the Philippines, and material excavated by Dr Robert Fox and Mr Alfredo Evangelista, of the National Museum, from the southeast coastal area of Luzon. This made up my mind that I should definitely produce a special issue of *Asian Perspectives* on the subject. But what is The Subject?

The subject here is the distinct relationship of a number of pottery complexes found scattered throughout Southeast Asia; the majority of which have not yet been defined and, for the most part, their pottery itself has not yet even been descriptively published. Therefore, to a large extent, this issue is descriptive. It presents for the first time a general description of two new pottery complexes in Malaya and Borneo; it recognizes and presents a new pottery complex in Indochina, and brings up to date the Kalanay pottery complex in the Philippines. It further presents the possibility that another related complex is present in eastern Indonesia, which may be distinct from the related pottery in the Celebes.

What are the relationships of these four, or more, pottery complexes? The technological relationships, relationships in the patterns and styles of decoration, and in form are, I feel, obvious from the papers which follow. Other than that, what the cultural and social relationships might be, I have no idea and I believe that it is too early to start serious conjectures along these lines. Much more work should be done to define the different complexes before a serious effort is made to determine their cultural relations. However, I feel that no harm is done if conjectures are made as they occur in the minds of the workers, as long as one constantly recalls that they are only conjectures. When the time comes to do the larger organizing, the various thoughts of different workers should be of great value.

This issue did not take shape until March 1959, when I wrote to M. Louis Malleret, recently retired Director of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient, to



ask him to contribute a paper. I wanted his contribution to be on his ideas of the relationship of the pottery of Sa-huỳnh (a site on the northeast coast of Vietnam and the first reported site from which came the pottery around which this issue is centred) to that of the other sites in Indochina. The resulting paper by Malleret was the first report to reach me, arriving in the late fall of 1959.

On my return to the United States in July 1959 and again in 1960, I made tentative arrangements with Professor H. Otley Beyer in Manila to include one or both of Dr Madeleine Colani's papers on Sa-huỳnh (Colani n.d. *a* and n.d. *b*). These were papers presented at the second Congress of Far-Eastern Prehistorians, held in Manila in 1935. Unfortunately, since 1935, the captions on one of the papers were badly damaged by insects. Beyer hoped to reconstruct the captions but has apparently been unable to do so by the time of this writing. They may be included if they arrive while the issue is still in page proof.

Relatively little attention has been paid to the site at Sa-huỳnh and neighbouring sites. In the United States it is virtually unknown, particularly because the major publications appear in French journals and these are found in only a very few of the largest libraries. Janse (1946, 10-11) mentioned the sites briefly in an American publication and illustrated some of his finds; he presents here more information in a brief article. As the sites are of importance and the publications not easily available I give here a brief summary from the previously published works, and at the same time take the opportunity to present the Sa-huỳnh pottery complex. Unless otherwise noted, what follows is taken from Parmentier (1924) or Colani (1937).

SA-HUỠNH AND NEIGHBOURING SITES IN ANNAM, VIETNAM

The site at Sa-huỳnh was left sadly neglected after its first discovery by Europeans. It was first reported in 1909 to the École Française d'Extrême-Orient by M. Vinet, who was the local chief of customs, at what must have been a very small post. This first report, extracts of which appear in the *Bulletin de l'EFEO* (Anon. 1909, 413), mentions a group of jars located in the sand dunes near the shore; the jars were said to contain beads and pottery. Samples which Vinet sent from his collections were entered in the catalogue of the École. After that, the site was forgotten for fourteen years.

In 1923, the long forgotten site was brought up at one of the meetings of the École. A letter was sent to M. Labarre, then the chief of customs at Sa-huỳnh, inquiring about its condition. Luckily, Mme Labarre was interested in such things, and after some correspondence, she received funds from the École to recover various objects from the site. She excavated in the site with advice from Dr Galinier, the doctor posted to Quảng-ngãi, a larger town a short distance away. The major article on Sa-huỳnh was written by Parmentier who examined the material excavated by Mme Labarre and sent to the Museum in Hanoi, and saw her notes. He was also present on the site for two or three days, and made a special trip to the site to photograph some of the jars *in situ*. His knowledge of the site was aided by his 'excavating one or two [jars] as a verification and classification' (Parmentier 1924, 326).

After Mme Labarre the site was undisturbed by archaeological excavation, until Madeleine Colani visited it in 1934 at the request of G. Coedes, then Director of the École. She excavated at the original site of Sa-huỳnh, at Trang-long, and at Phú-khu'o'ng. The only report of these excavations to appear was an extremely brief account in the Cahiers (Colani 1937). Mention of Sa-huỳnh was made in *Megalithes du Haut-Laos* (Colani 1935), but this was not descriptive. Her two other reports presented at the Congress in Manila in 1935 were mainly descriptive reports, and if not published here, will appear in due course of time.

In 1939 Janse excavated at Sa-huỳnh, nearby Phú-khu'o'ng, and at Trang-long. The final report on these excavations has not yet appeared, but will make up a part of volume IV of his *Archaeological Excavations in Indochina*. Since the war no further work has been done in this area.

The site called Sa-huỳnh is not actually in Sa-huỳnh but nearby in an area called Long-thành, or Thàn-cu. Parmentier (1924: 326) presents the location at lat. $16^{\circ} 31'$ and long. $118^{\circ} 59'$. This was a double typographical error which has been corrected to Lat. $15^{\circ} 22'$ North and Long. $108^{\circ} 6'$ East by Malleret in his article, p. 113, which places it just north of Quảng-ngãi.

No description of the area of the site of Sa-huỳnh can equal that given by Colani (1937: 8) and it will not bear translation. I hope that I will be pardoned if I present it in the original.

Dans la province de Quảng-ngãi, à Sa-huỳnh, la bordure de dunes atteint jusqu'à 19 metres de hauteur. Elle est située entre une baie et la mer. Au Sud, une petit massif rocheux, côte 93. A l'ouest, en bas l'eau tranquille du golfe; au fond, la sombre chaîne annamitique. A l'est la mer lumineuse, tantôt jolie, scintillante, tantôt foncée tragique, courroucée, menaçante. Sous nos pieds, le sable, composé en majeure partie de grains de quartz, brille sous la douce caresse des rayons du soleil.

In 1924, Vinet estimated that there were about 200 jars in the site which measured about 50 by 80 metres along the shore. Unless the various excavators dug up the same jars over and over again, this must have been a gross under-estimation. Mme Labarre excavated 120 jars and, between the time of her excavations and of the first reported discovery, the villagers in the neighbourhood had done a considerable amount of digging. Colani excavated 55 jars in 1934 and remarked that in the interval between her excavations and those of Mme Labarre, the natives had dug up a number of jars and sold the cornelian beads they had found inside them to the Chinese (Colani 1937: 8). In 1939 Janse excavated about 30 more. Parmentier (1924: 326) mentioned that the site was constantly being disturbed purposefully for the beads, 'and the children have found there thousands of baubles with which they amuse themselves'. He says that when he visited the site there were broken jars left about and some pieces of bronze, copper, iron, earrings and cornelian.

Parmentier says that the jars show no ordered arrangement and are at various elevations and never superimposed. Colani indicates that the jars were in groups of four to ten, and Janse says in groups of two to eight. Many of the jars had lids, described as trunconical or like an inverted flower-pot. Colani does not think that the trunconical vessels are lids as she found no jars with lids. She feels rather that they are separate *dépôts d'os humains* (1937: 9). Janse, however, considers them as lids (see his article in this issue).

Inside the jars were usually found a similar assortment of objects:

. . . one or two black pots, one or two cups [what I would call shallow bowls with ring stands], a bizarre object which we call a lamp, a tool of iron, often a *peson de fuseau* [possibly a spindle whorl or an earthenware bead], some objects of ornament, glass beads, drilled cornelians, ear pendants and earrings in hard stone or glass, sometimes a tool or small bell of bronze, often some remains of human bone.

(Parmentier 1924: 326)

Mme Labarre noted that when the pseudo-lamp was present, beads were absent (Parmentier 1924: 326). Colani (1937: 9) notes that the small pottery vessels were present in the sand around the larger jars as well as inside. Janse (1946: 11) mentions further that the bottom of these smaller vessels are usually 'perforated purposely, probably in order to "kill" the object before it was deposited in the tomb'.

Other similar sites have been found in the general area of Sa-huỳnh. Mme Labarre, in looking around for a site which had not been disturbed, discovered a site near the village of Phu-cô (Phú-khuong), five to six kilometres north of the site at Sa-huỳnh. Her excavations there indicated that it was an undisturbed site, very much like the one at Sa-huỳnh. Colani excavated 187 jars there and Janse excavated there as well. A third site reported by Colani is on the surface of a sand dune at Trang-long. This sand dune is locally called the 'plateau of beads' because of the tremendous number of beads on the surface of the site (Colani 1937: 10).

The three sites are all closely related with similar pottery and associated artifacts. The most common and obvious of the associated artifacts are the beads. The beads are made of glass or hard stone. They are found in many of the jars but not in large numbers in any one jar. The largest beads are 6 to 9 mm. in diameter and are made of a dull blue glass. Smaller blue-green transparent glass beads are about 3 mm. diam. and are found in nearly all of the jars. Less common glass beads are: an opaque dull yellow green, 6-8 mm. diam.; similar smaller very fragile beads of a true yellow; very hard dark red, 3-4 mm. diam.; same size a pale red veined; red nearly flat, 1-2 mm. diam.; and other small beads of a cylindrical-spherical shape. There are some true cylindrical glass beads, blue or green and fragile. Two or three beads of cylindrical shape, up to 7 mm. long and 2-3 mm. diam. with wavy transverse veins, were reported by Parmentier (1924: 337). Most of the stone beads are cornelian in a variety of shapes (Parmentier 1924: fig. 15 and pl. VII). The stone beads are drilled at both ends.

Stone and glass bangles are not uncommon. Stone and glass earrings and ear pendants, some made of jade, are in similar shapes (Parmentier 1924: fig. 16 and pl. VII). A few broken pieces of glass bracelets were also reported.

Metal artifacts are neither rare nor abundant. Very little bronze was found. There was one bronze bracelet and one goblet (Parmentier 1924: fig. 17 F). A few small conical bells were recovered. These are oval in cross section and had a small loop at the top for hanging. They have a clapper suspended from a transverse bar placed near the top (Parmentier 1924: fig. 17 A). Small spherical, slit bells were also found.

Iron was somewhat more common. Parmentier reported a number of pieces of very rusty iron, recognizable as agricultural tools. Colani reported a number of pieces with crude sockets, apparently tools for working the earth. She also reports

several 'cutlasses', some still showing their original facing (1937: 10). The most interesting of the iron objects are mentioned only by Colani; these are small zoomorphic figures and were the special subject of one of the papers she presented at the Congress held in Manila in 1935 (Colani n.d. a). She discusses these figures briefly in her report in the *Cahiers* (1937: 10-11), where she indicates that they were common. At Phu-cô, where she excavated 187 jars, she found 184 zoomorphic specimens, found both inside and outside the jars. One was a bird's head with a beak like a duck, another a knife with a blade made of two thin plates, thrust at an angle into the head of some kind of animal. An anthropomorphic figure had a 'head pierced by two openings, the eyes; a long neck; the body asymmetrical, coming to a point', without limbs.

Cloth impressions were noted on several artifacts. Parmentier mentioned two pieces showing traces of linen, one of coarse weave and the other fine. Colani noted impressions on both iron and pottery. One 'fossilized' cloth of a simple overunder weave, was made of thread about 0.5 mm. thick (1937: 11).

Colani reported another site, along the railroad right-of-way nearby, with pottery similar to that of Sa-huỳnh. With the pottery were associated polished stone tools including rectangular axes (adzes). No fishing tools or fish hooks were found at any of these sites.

THE SA-HUỠNH POTTERY COMPLEX

It is not yet possible to present any sort of a detailed picture of the Sa-huỳnh pottery complex, nor even to present one specific pottery type belonging to the complex. However, from the articles of Parmentier (1924) and Janse (1946) and from the illustrations with those of Janse and Malleret in this issue, a general idea can be arrived at of at least the Sa-huỳnh pottery.

No systematic analysis or description of the Sa-huỳnh pottery has been published. Colani's unpublished article 'La ceramique de Sa-huỳnh' probably covers one or both of these subjects. The only organized statement available is by Colani (1937: 9), saying that decoration is by incision, a stamp, or from the edge of an *Arca* shell. Parmentier presents bits of information on decoration but several poor plates and illustrations raise questions on decoration which are not answered in his text. However, his drawings do present a variety of forms as well as some information on the decoration. Copies of the drawings of pottery from Sa-huỳnh taken from Parmentier appear here in Figs. 1 and 2, not in the order as given by him but rearranged purely by form. Reference to the original figures is not made except in special cases. With the original article in hand there is no difficulty in identifying the figure if so desired. Malleret presents new information on this pottery in this issue.

Clay and Surface Treatment

There are two varieties of colour in the finished pottery: black vessels are common, while the reddish ones are rare. They are not really black, but a blackish-brown at the surface, black in the centre and reddish towards both the inner and outer surfaces; their surface is bright but without luster and has been compared to a graphite covered surface—but, it is not been specifically stated as covered

with graphite. This black pottery is smoother, a little more resistant (?) and thinner than the red pottery (Parmentier 1924: 333-334). The large jars are of the red fired paste without the black coating (Janse 1946: 256). It is quite possible that both pastes are the same.

The large jars (burial jars) are plain except for some impressions of cloth (*d'étoffe*) or cord marked (Janse 1946: 256). There is some indication of the use of a carved paddle on a few of the smaller vessels. One small pot with a low ring foot (Fig. 2 *b*) 'has as decoration only uneven rays as from the stroke of a talon, if it is not the trace of a basket in which it could have been made' (Parmentier 1924: 331). This could be the result of a parallel grooved paddle. A similar possibility is found with a small thick pot (Fig. 1 *o*) decorated 'de grandes hachures que zèbrent la panse en dessinant de vagues losanges' (331). The 'vagues losanges' could have resulted from strokes at varying angles from a parallel grooved paddle.

Decoration

The methods of decoration are incising, impressing, and rarely, painting. The incising was done with a single pointed tool. The impressing was done using a simple tool with a solid triangular or circular head, or a wavy edge shell producing a compound tool impression. The painting is combined with incising and is used to set off incised patterns. A red colour appears to be the only colour used.

The most common patterns have elements of triangles, rectangular meanders, chevrons, or narrow, rectangular, vertical bands. Except on the so-called lamps, the elements are arranged in horizontal bands above the maximum diameter of vessels with constricted mouths (Fig. 1 *j-n* and 2 *a, d-e*), or on the lip and the ring-foot of shallow bowls (Fig. 2 *f-i*) (called cups by Parmentier). The lamps are decorated over much of their surface, but still in horizontal bands (Fig. 2 *k-p*). The most common pattern is a band of base to base, point to point, or alternating triangles between single or double parallel lines (Fig. 1 *j-m* and 2 *a, d-e, j, l, and p*). Below the lower border pendant dashes (Fig. 1 *m*) or parallel wavy lines (Fig. 1 *k, l, and n*) may appear. The vertical rectangular elements are sets of parallel lines (Fig. 2 *a, f-i, and m-n*) or pairs of vertical parallel lines (Fig. 2 *k and n*). For the shallow bowls with ring foot (Fig. 2 *f-i*):

The rim offers a constant ornamentation, which is sometimes repeated below on the foot, alternating blank vertical bands, painted in red, and bands without colour with incised vertical hachures. The foot offers diverse zones of simple decoration, or of concentric squares cut in half by the rim of the base. (Parmentier 1924: 332)

Form

There is considerable variety in the form of the Sa-huỳnh pottery, and there seems to be some differences between the three sites. The possible lamps (Fig. 2 *k-p*) have been found only at Phú-khuong. Parmentier (1924: 333) explains this away by saying 'Their absence at Thành-dúc (Thàn-cu) is easily explained by the thousand usages which could be made by the children'. Janse, on the other hand, questions in this issue whether they are really of archæological origin. From Parmentier's report, however, there seems to be no doubt of their association;

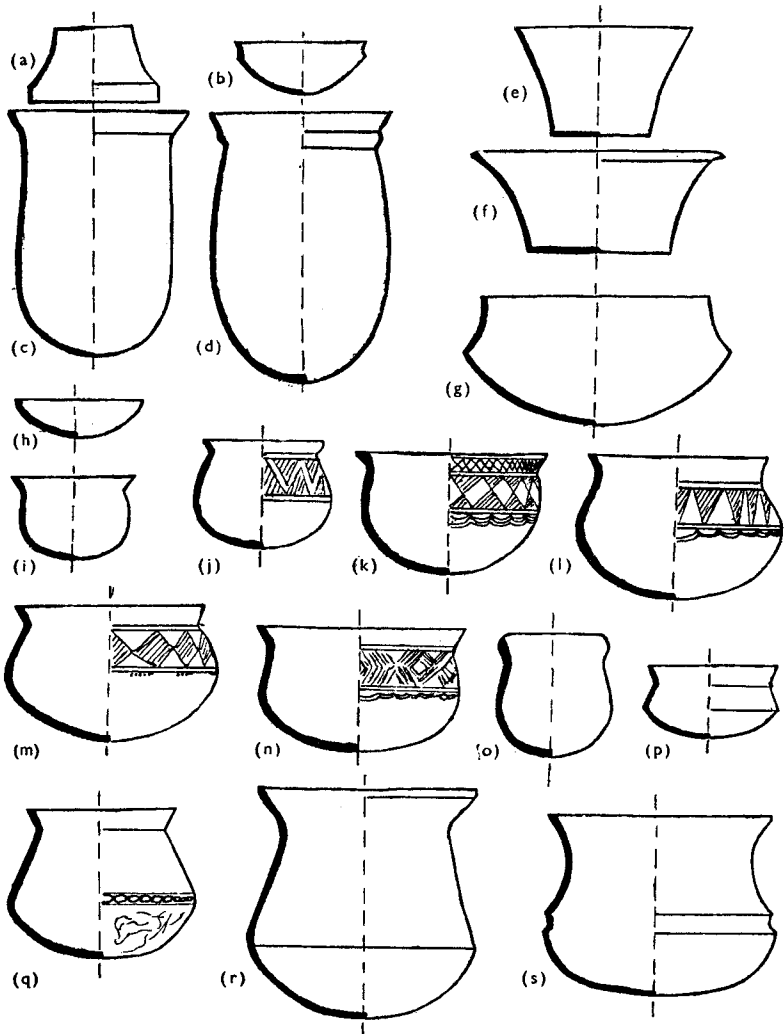


FIG. 1. Form and decoration of Sa-huỳnh pottery, taken from Parmentier, 1924

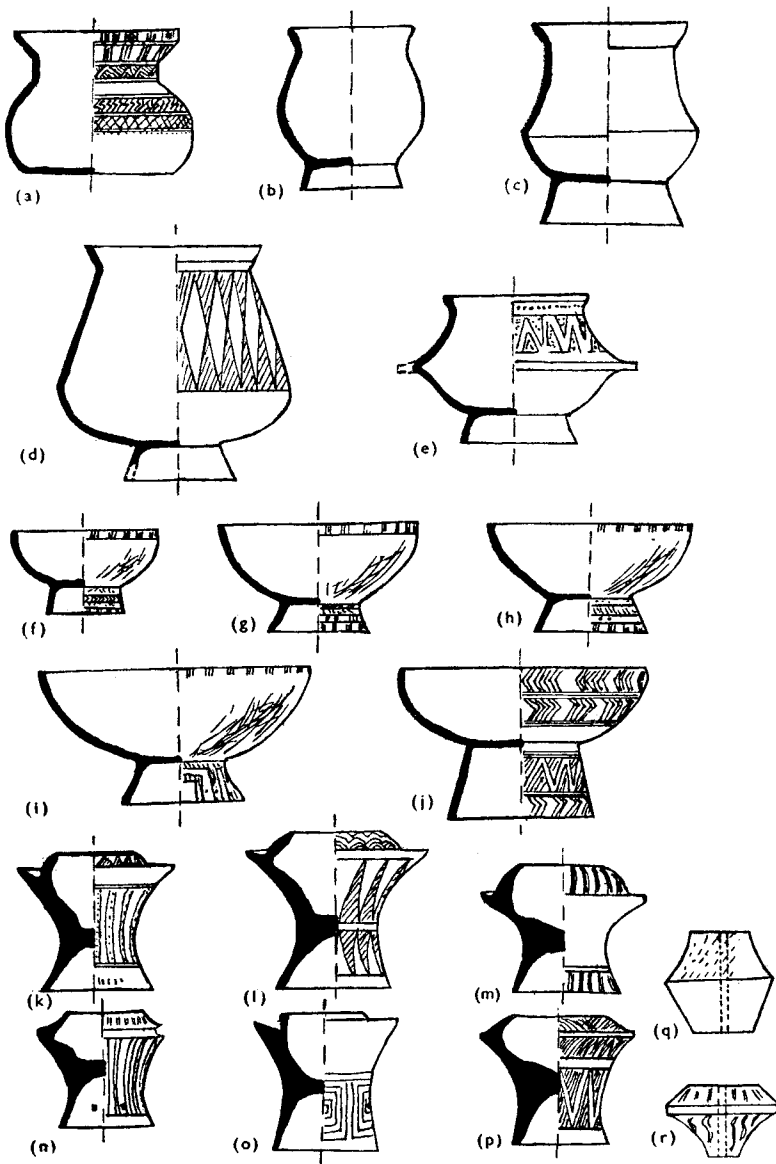


FIG. 2. Form and decoration of Sa-huỳnh pottery, taken from Parmentier, 1924

their decoration certainly fits in with the Sa-huỳnh pottery. There may well be a chronological difference between the sites and this could be of chronological importance.

There were several apparent errors in the indicated scale of the vessels figured by Parmentier so no specific scale is given for the figures here presented. The large jars in Fig. 1 *a-d* are probably about half the scale of the rest of the vessels. The vessels of Figs. 1 *e-s* and 2 *a-j* are about 1/8th size and the lamps at a somewhat larger scale.

The burial jars are commonly cylindrical with round bottoms (Fig. 1 *c-d*) and with trunconic tops or lids (Fig. 1 *a*). Parmentier feels that the vessel of Fig. 1 *b* is a second, rare variety of burial jar. My personal feeling would be that it is a lid; there are rare flat-bottomed trunconic vessels that are too small for lids to the large jars. The trunconic lids are decorated with incised meanders and painted red between incised borders, or with a line of simple tool impressions (punctuations) between incised borders.

Vessels with a rounded bottom and without a ring stand are plain or decorated. There are very shallow bowls (Fig. 1 *h*) which are very rare, shallow bowls with an angle between the bottom and side (Fig. 1 *g*), pots plain or decorated (Fig. 1 *j-o*), or several varieties of angle pots (Fig. 1 *p-s*). The pots have somewhat constricted mouths with flaring rims.

Vessels with ring stands may be similar in shape to the pots with or without angles (Fig. 2 *b-d*), or shallow bowls with varyingly proportioned ring stands (Fig. 2 *f-j*). One extreme angle pot has a flat ring of clay as a girdle around its centre (Fig. 2 *e*).

The so-called lamps are all of the same shape with little variation in size (Fig. 2 *k-p*).

One unique pot has a flat bottom (Fig. 2 *a*).

Techniques of Manufacture

The ring foot was made separately from the vessel and applied to the body before firing. This is true also of the lamps, whose bottom and top halves were made separately before being joined.

A number of the vessels have pairs of perforations through the wall, particularly in the ring foot of the shallow bowls and the lamps.

The flat bottom of the vessel in Fig 2 *a* makes one wonder if it might not have been made for a ring foot which was either not added before firing or which fired so poorly that the joint broke off cleanly. The trunconic vessel of Fig. 1 *f* would just fit as a foot for the flat-bottomed vessel.

Spindle Whorls (?) or Net Sinkers

Biconical perforated objects of earthenware are common. They are of two varieties, symmetrical (Fig. 2 *q*) and asymmetrical (Fig. 2 *r*). One of the symmetrical ones has one half painted red and the other half plain. Parmentier (1924: 336) who does not feel that these are net sinkers, says,

The first idea which comes is to attribute to these pieces the role of *plombs de filet*. But this clay is not strong enough, especially saturated with water, to resist a shock, and one scarcely decorates *plombs de filet*. Moreover their isolation in each jar contradicts this hypothesis. In Europe, one would consider the pieces analagous to balance weights; but the use of the balance is unknown in Indochina. . . .

The idea of spindle whorls for these objects did not come apparently to Parmentier.

When Colani's article on the pottery of Sa-huỳnh is published it will undoubtedly give us a much more satisfactory description of these objects as well as of the Sa-huỳnh pottery as a whole—until then this will have to do.

SA-HUỠNH RELATED POTTERY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The relationship of Sa-huỳnh pottery to other pottery in Southeast Asia was first noted in print, in 1957, when two articles appeared independently in Volume XX of *Artibus Asiae*. They made similar comparisons and pointed the same way, though working from different sources.

Malleret, in his article, pointed out the resemblance between an earthenware goblet from Annam, the pottery of Sa-huỳnh, and that excavated at Gua Cha, Kelantan, Malaya. He also remarked on the similar elements of decoration found on the Sa-huỳnh pottery and the Đôngson bronzes. Solheim in a later number of the same volume (1957: 279–288) gave a preliminary description of the Kalanay pottery complex in the Philippines, and in looking for the possible source of this pottery, relationships with Sa-huỳnh pottery and Đôngson bronzes are brought out. Further relationship is noted with the site of Tran-ninh in Laos (Solheim 1957: 288). The stone burial-jars at this site are of the same shape as a variety of Kalanay jars, and artifacts associated with the stone jars are similar to artifacts associated with the early portion of the Kalanay pottery complex. Malleret remarks on the similarities between Sa-huỳnh and Tran-ninh (1957: 53–54).

Dealing with some of the artifacts associated with the Gua Cha pottery in Malaya, Sieveking (1954–55: 107) notes their similarity to artifacts of the Upper Neolithic in Indochina. These are in part 'small thin-section quadrangular polished stone axes, adzes and chisels'. This same type of stone tool is associated with Kalanay pottery complex sites in the Philippines (see the article on Kalanay pottery complex in this issue).

CONCLUSIONS

This is meant to be only conclusions which can be made from published materials so far published, not from what follows. It points the direction of my thoughts and preconceived ideas in arranging this issue, and to some extent provides a shaky framework for what follows. The map on p. 98 shows approximate locations of important sites mentioned previously and to follow.

We can start from Colani's conclusions in 1937 and add two further problems. In *Megalithes du Haut-Laos*, Colani conjectured that the culture of Sa-huỳnh had been derived from that culture which had produced the stone jars of Tran-ninh. By 1937 she had found no reason to deny this, nor had she found any further evidence in this direction. For dating she said that Louis Finot placed Sa-huỳnh,

and the other cemeteries, at the beginning of the Christian era, and thus previous to the Hinduization of the area (1937: 11-12). In her paper on the Sa-huỳnh pottery read at the Manila Congress in 1935, Colani was looking to Halstadt for ultimate origins. There are certainly interesting resemblances between the Halstadt pottery and that of Sa-huỳnh, both in decoration and form. The second problem, and much more immediate, is that of Dongson. Motifs are shared, there is a common area, and apparent contemporaneity between Dongson bronzes and the Sa-huỳnh related pottery. Are they synonymous? The pottery excavated at Dongson does not resemble the Sa-huỳnh pottery in the slightest. While some bronze was found at Sa-huỳnh, there was no close resemblance between it and the Dongson bronzes. All that can be said is that there must have been some relationship between the two.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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